

Raising Student Achievement

A Standards of Learning Update from the Virginia Board of Education January 2005

Measuring Success

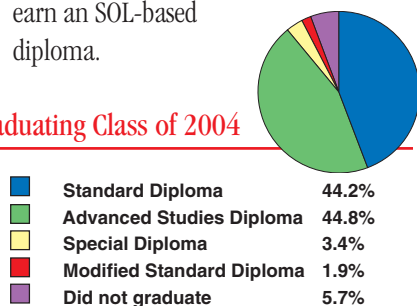
As the tenth anniversary of the Board of Education's decision to raise academic standards and hold schools accountable for student achievement approaches, the progress of our schools and students since the launch of the Standards of Learning (SOL) program is unmistakable.

Since the first year of SOL testing in 1998, student achievement has increased in all subject areas, including double-digit increases on 20 of the 22 assessments administered during all seven years.

The high school graduating class of 2004 was the first required to pass SOL tests to earn a diploma.

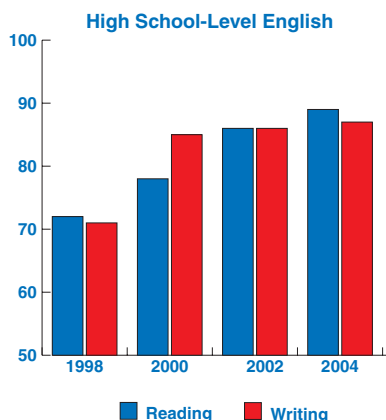
- Of those seniors in school year 2003-2004, 94.3 percent graduated - the same percent as in 2002, when less stringent graduation requirements were in effect.
- More of the class of 2004 earned Advanced Studies diplomas than earned Standard diplomas.
- Approximately 1,500 more students with disabilities completed high school during 2003-2004 than during the previous year, indicating that the Modified Standard Diploma is serving its purpose of providing an incentive for students with disabilities to stay in school and earn an SOL-based diploma.

Graduating Class of 2004



Achievement in high school-level English remained high.

- In English/reading, 89 percent of students passed in 2004, a gain of 17 points since 1998.

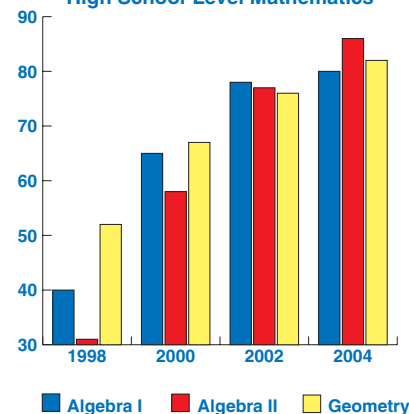


- In English/writing, 87 percent of students passed in 2004, up 16 percentage points from 1998.

Achievement in high school-level mathematics also has increased significantly.

- In Algebra I, the percentage of students passing was 80 percent in the spring of 2004, a 40-point increase since 1998, the first year of SOL testing.
- The statewide pass rate for Algebra II in 2004 was 86 percent, a 55-point improvement since 1998.
- The 2004 geometry pass rate was 82 percent, a gain of 30 points since 1998.

High School-Level Mathematics



These pass rates do not include high school students who passed tests after participating in remedial programs. The Board of Education has set no limit on the number of times a high school student may retake an SOL test needed for graduation.

Improving Schools

Virginia's students are achieving more because the quality of instruction in Virginia's public schools is improving.

Increasing student achievement is reflected in school accreditation ratings. More than eight out of 10 of the state's schools already have met the standard for full accreditation. In addition, the number of elementary schools achieving the commonwealth's highest school-quality rating also increased, even though the requirements for achievement in reading, history, and science were higher than in previous years.

"Ten years after Virginia embraced the Standards of Learning, the evidence is clear that maintaining high academic standards is the smartest choice for bettering the lives of young people and ensuring the future prosperity of the commonwealth."

Thomas M. Jackson, Jr., President, Board of Education

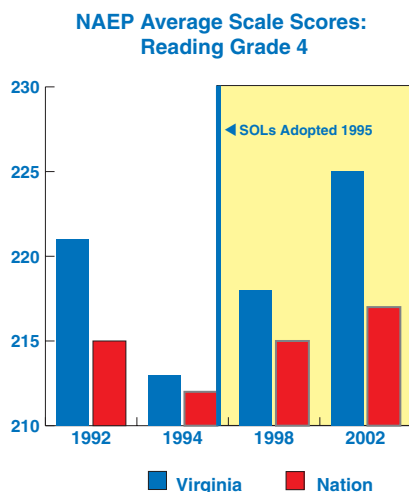
- 1,544 (or 85.5 percent) of Virginia's schools are now Fully Accredited.
- 1,344 (or 74%) of Virginia's schools met the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001's annual measurable requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress for reading and mathematics.

Verified Achievement

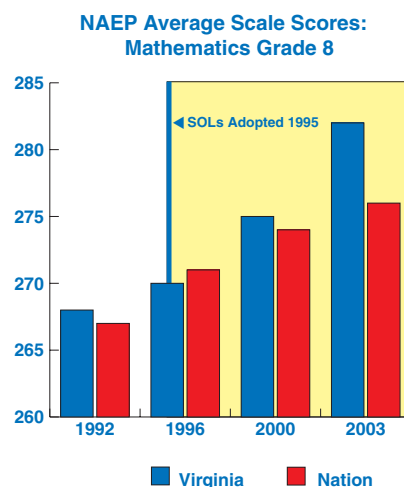
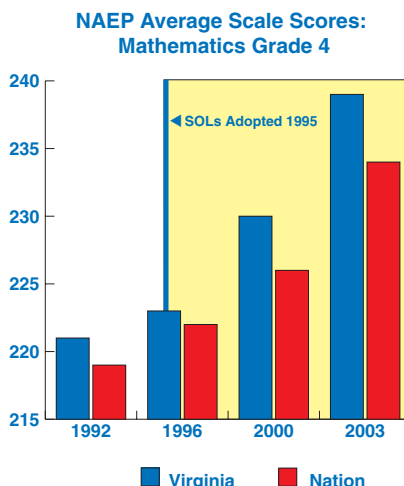
The increase in student achievement is confirmed by the performance of Virginia students on a variety of nationally recognized tests.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

- Since the adoption of the SOL in 1995, the average score of Virginia fourth graders on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test has risen 10 points and is now seven points higher than the national average.
- Virginia students in grades 4 and 8 outperformed students nationwide on the 2002 NAEP writing tests. The commonwealth's fourth graders achieved an average score of 157, four points higher than the national average of 153. Virginia eighth graders also achieved an average score of 157, compared with the national average of 152.



- The average scores of Virginia fourth- and eighth-graders on the 2003 NAEP mathematics tests rose by nine and seven points, respectively, compared with achievement in 2000. The percentage of Virginia grade 4 students performing at or above the proficient level increased by 12 points to 36 percent. The percentage of eighth graders performing at or above the proficient level rose by six points to 31 percent.



- The average mathematics score of African-American students in grade 4 in Virginia on the 2003 NAEP rose by 12 points. The average score of black students in grade 8 increased by nine points.

SAT I, ACT, and Advanced Placement

- Since 2000, the average score of Virginia seniors on the verbal portion of the SAT I has increased by six points while the achievement of Virginia students on the mathematics portion of the test is up by 9 points.
- A record number of Virginia high school students took the ACT. During 2004, 10,172 Virginia students took the ACT, compared with 6,191 in 2000.
- During the 2003-04 school year, 39,464 Virginia students took Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This represented a 9.5-percent increase in AP participation over the previous year.

Continuing Success

While this year's achievement results are encouraging, much is yet to be accomplished.

The goal is for all students to reach their highest potential as learners and as responsible citizens of the commonwealth.

In Virginia, academic standards are in place, and educators are implementing them. Virginia has a valid and reliable assessment system to gauge student progress, and accountability goals are set for English, mathematics, science, and history and social science.

The persistence and hard work of countless individuals - qualities that distinguish virtually all successful endeavors - have helped Virginia's students achieve at impressive levels. Teachers and students across the state are stepping up to the challenge.

Clearly, Virginia's schools are headed in the right direction.